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U.S. Department of Education
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement

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Participation of Black Students in Higher Education: A Statistical Profile from 1970-71 to 1980-81

Introduction

This report describes the participation of black students in higher education during the 1970's. Most of the data in this report came from Federal government surveys in which students and degree recipients are identified by race. The surveys cover virtually all colleges and universities in the United States.

After the highlights, there is a short discussion of the demographic changes among black youth in the 1970's, followed by information on enrollment and, more importantly, on degree completions.

Highlights

- During the first half of the 1970's:
 - the large increase in black enrollment coincided with the expansion in both Federal legislation and Federal policies aimed at reducing barriers to higher education for minorities and low-income students.
 - by 1975, the percent of black high school graduates who enrolled in college was the same as that for whites (although high school graduation rates were still lower for blacks than whites).
 - the increase in black college enrollment took place at the undergraduate level. Blacks grew to 10 percent of full-time undergraduates, about the same proportion as they comprised of all high school graduates 18 to 24 years old.
 - black enrollment at the post-baccalaureate level did not experience an equivalent upsurge. In fact, by 1976 there was a smaller proportion of blacks in graduate and first-professional schools than there had been in the early 1970's.

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- During the last half of the 1970's:
 - black participation in higher education stabilized in most areas.
 - the number of blacks who enrolled in college remained about the same, in spite of the fact that the number of black youth eligible for college increased by almost 20 percent.
 - the number and proportion of degrees awarded to blacks remained about the same at the bachelor's, doctor's, and first-professional levels, while there were substantial declines at the master's level.
 - the number of blacks receiving master's degrees declined 16 percent, four times greater than the decline for non-blacks.
 - while total degree awards to blacks did not change substantially (except at the master's degree level), in certain areas there were significant shifts:

-- between black women, who had considerable increases at all levels except the master's, and black men, who declined at all levels.

-- between discipline divisions--for example, education was replaced by business and management as the most popular discipline for black bachelor's degree recipients in 1981. The ranking of the three most popular disciplines for bachelors's degree recipients were the same for blacks and non-blacks for the first time: business and management, education, and social sciences.

- Although the traditionally black institutions (TBI's) did not absorb most of the increase in black enrollment during the decade of the 1970's, they still play an important role in graduating black students. In 1981:

- TBI's still graduated over half of the black bachelor's degree recipients in the 20 States where these institutions are located.
- TBI's graduated one-third of the black master's and first-professional degree recipients in these States.

- In 1981, in non-traditionally black institutions:

- blacks comprised less than 5 percent of degree recipients at all-degree levels.
- private institutions awarded a higher percent of their degrees to blacks than did public institutions.

Demographic Changes Among Black Youth

In the mid-1960's, Congress passed legislation aimed at reducing barriers to higher education for minorities, and in the early 1970's established major financial aid programs for low-income students. These Federal policies and programs facilitated the access of blacks to higher education.¹ In conjunction with reduced barriers and expanded opportunities in higher education for blacks, demographic changes among black youth during the 1970's produced an increasing pool of persons eligible to attend college. These demographic changes contributed to the phenomenal growth in black college enrollment during the early 1970's, but after 1975, an increasing pool of eligible black youth did not translate into a corresponding increase in college enrollment.

In order to estimate the growth in the "college-age" population, this study examines the population between the ages of 18 and 24, from which the majority of students are drawn.² The black population in this age group increased by almost a million from 1970 to 1980, with the largest share of this increase occurring in the first half of the decade. The proportion of this black population who became eligible for college by completing high school increased

Year	Black high school graduates 18-24		
	Blacks aged 18-24 (in thousands)	Number (in thousands)	Percent of all blacks 18-24
1970	2,692	1,602	60
1975	3,213	2,081	65
1980	3,555	2,479	70

Note: The percent of whites 18-24 who were high school graduates was 81 percent in 1970 and 83 percent in 1975 and 1980.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, School Enrollments - Social and Economic Characteristics of Students, Series P-20, Nos. 222, 303, and 362.

from 60 percent to 70 percent from 1970 to 1980; however, even with the increase in high school graduation rates among black youth, their rate was still much lower than that for white youth, which increased from 81 to 83 percent in the same period.

¹For comprehensive policy discussions of black participation in higher education, see: Institute for the Study of Educational Policy, Equal Educational Opportunity status reports (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1976, 1978, and 1980).

²In 1970, about three-fourths of all black college students were between 18 and 24 years old; in 1980, about two-thirds of all black college students were in this age group. See: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, School Enrollment - Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1970, and October 1980, Series P-20, Nos. 222 and 362.

Chart 1.-- Demographic changes in the black and white populations aged 18-24: 1970, 1975, and 1980

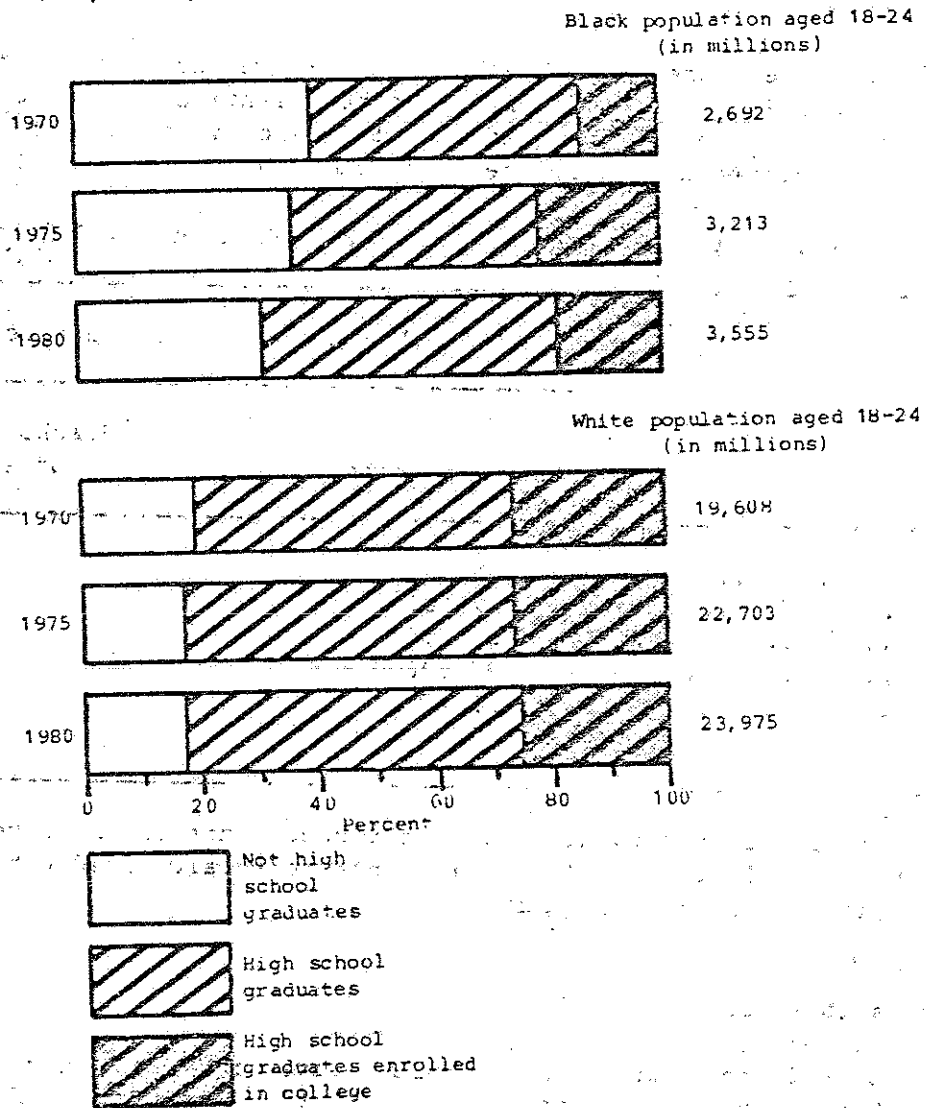
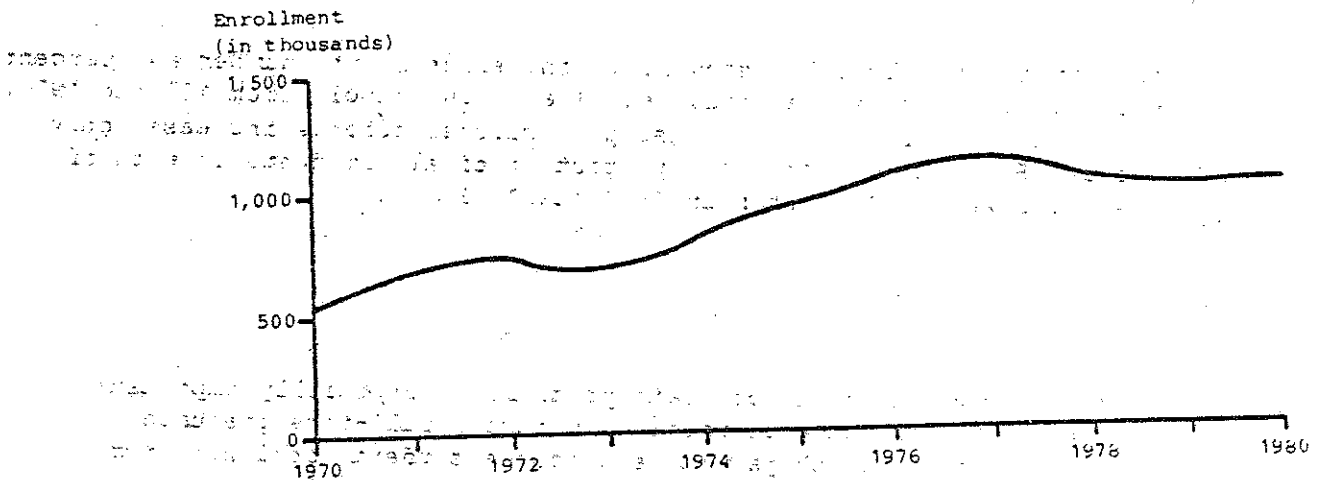


Chart 2.-- College enrollment of blacks aged 14 to 34: 1970 to 1980



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, School Enrollment -- Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1980, Series P-20, No. 362, p.5.

Graduate enrollment

At the graduate level, the number of black full-time students has remained between 21,000 and 22,100 since 1972.⁴ The representation of blacks among all full-time graduate students increased from 5.3 percent in 1972 to 5.5 percent in 1974, and then remained around 5.0 percent from 1976 until 1980 (table 2).

Table 2.-- Black full-time graduate enrollment: Even years, 1972 to 1980

Year	Full-time graduate students*	
	Black students	Blacks as a percent of all students
1972	21,500	5.3
1974	22,100	5.5
1976	22,100	5.1
1978	21,000	4.9
1980	22,100	5.0

* Excludes unclassified students (i.e., not candidates for a degree).

Note: Data not available for 1970. Percents were calculated with actual numbers, not rounded numbers.

First-professional enrollment

From 1972 to 1980, the number of black full-time first-professional students in the United States increased from 8,700 to 11,500. However, blacks as a proportion of all first-professional students was lower in the last half of the decade than in the first half. In 1974, blacks comprised 4.9 percent of all full-time first-professional students; in 1980, blacks comprised 4.6 percent (table 3).

Data by first-professional fields show large increases in the number and percent of black students enrolled in medical, dental and law schools from 1970 to 1974. After that, the number of blacks in these professional schools increased only slightly until 1980, while blacks as a proportion of all students in each of these fields was lower in 1980 than in 1974 (table 3).

⁴Data on part-time enrollment in graduate programs is especially important since part-time graduate students usually outnumber full-time graduate students. The number of black part-time graduate students declined from 43,300 in 1976 to 37,800 in 1980. Blacks as a percent of all part-time graduate students also declined -- from 6.6 percent in 1976 to 5.8 percent in 1980.

Enrollment by Types of Institutions

Of the more than 1 million black college students in 1980, 42 percent were enrolled in 2-year colleges.⁵ Even though many of these black students attended part-time or were not seeking a degree, the 2-year colleges also enrolled a significant proportion of the black full-time undergraduate students seeking a degree (34 percent). This was 8 percentage points higher than the proportion of non-black full-time undergraduates who were enrolled in 2-year colleges (26 percent).

Three-fourths of black full-time students were enrolled in public institutions, a proportion similar to that for other students. Blacks comprised 10.1 percent of all full-time students in public institutions, down from 10.3 percent in 1976; the number of black full-time students remained about the same from 1976 to 1980, while the number of white students increased slightly.

In private institutions, blacks comprised 9.8 percent of all full-time students, up from 9.4 percent in 1976. The number of black full-time students increased considerably from 1976 to 1980, almost twice the percentage increase for white full-time students. In fact, private institutions accounted for the entire 20,000 increase in total black full-time enrollment from 1976 to 1980 (unpublished tabulations).

In 1980, two-thirds of all black college students were enrolled in colleges whose student bodies were predominantly white.⁶ Twenty-seven percent of black college students were enrolled in predominantly black institutions⁷, and another 7 percent attended colleges where no one racial group comprised over half of the student body.

About 1 in 5 black college students in the United States now attend the traditionally black institutions of higher education (TBI's). These 102 schools were founded to educate blacks when segregation was legal (before the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education), and it is estimated that, until the early 1970's, they enrolled over half of black college students in the States where they are located (chart 3). These States will be referred to hereafter as "TBI States" for simplicity.

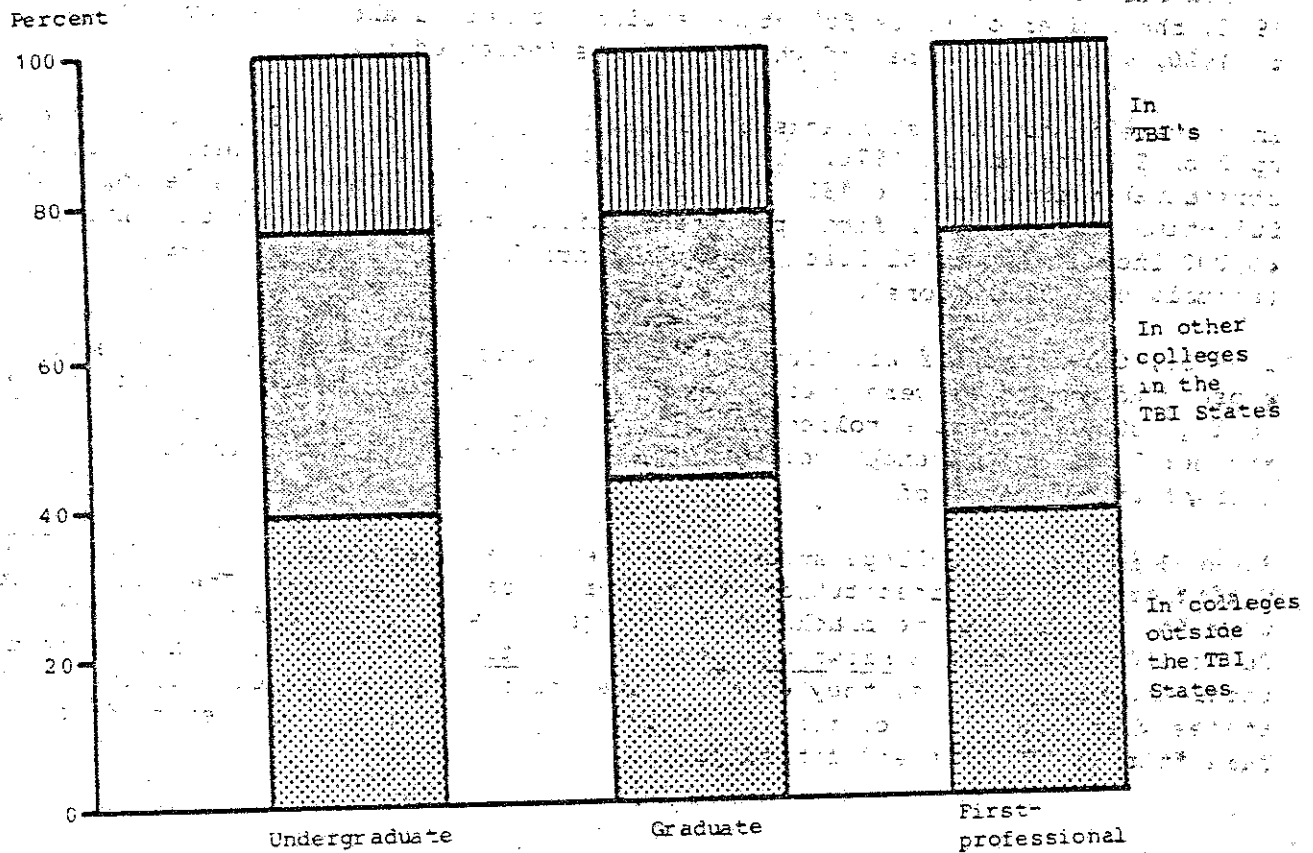
⁵This proportion has not changed since 1976, the first year this type of data was available. If the reader is interested in a thorough discussion on minorities in 2-year colleges, see: Michael A. Olivas, The Dilemma of Access (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1979).

⁶Defined here as those in which white students comprised over 50 percent of the total student body.

⁷For information on the 166 predominantly black colleges in 1980, see: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Update on Black College Students and Black Colleges: 1980-81," Bulletin 81-361, September 1981. Of the 102 traditionally black institutions, 98 were predominantly black in 1980.

Although the number of black students attending TBI's increased during the early 1970's, the number of black students attending other institutions increased much more.⁸ The proportion of black full-time students in the TBI States who were enrolled in the TBI's declined to 40 percent by 1976, and then to 38 percent in 1980.⁹ By 1980, the TBI's enrolled about 4 out of 10 black full-time students in the TBI States at all levels - undergraduate, graduate, and first-professional. As a proportion of all black full-time students nationally, TBI's enrolled almost a fourth at each level (chart 4).

Chart 4.-- Distribution of black full-time students by level, in TBI's, other colleges inside TBI States, and colleges outside the TBI States: 1980



⁸It should be noted that the majority of black students enrolled in non-TBI's were in 2-year colleges (51 percent in 1980). Among black first-time freshmen in non-TBI's, two-thirds were enrolled in 2-year colleges in 1980.

⁹The TBI's are enrolling an increasing proportion of black students at certain levels, however. For example, the proportion of black first-time freshmen in the TBI States who enrolled in TBI's increased slightly -- from 29 percent in 1978 to 31 percent in 1980. At the graduate level, the proportion of black full-time students in the TBI States who enrolled in TBI's increased from 28 percent in 1976 to 38 percent in 1980.

Table 4.-- Black representation in non-traditionally black institutions (non-TBI's) by level, inside and outside the States where TBI's are located: Even years, 1970 to 1980

Black full-time students* in non-TBI's				
Level and year	In TBI States		Outside TBI States	
	Number	Blacks as a percent of all students	Number	Blacks as a percent of all students
<u>Undergraduate</u>				
1970	79,950	4.3	117,380	4.1
1972	128,020	6.0	188,070	5.8
1974	157,880	7.5	212,970	6.3
1976	216,380	9.5	239,280	7.0
1978	214,800	9.4	240,540	7.2
1980	233,990	9.6	246,600	6.9
<u>Graduate</u>				
1970	-	-	-	-
1972	7,070	4.6	10,370	4.1
1974	7,070	4.9	10,540	4.2
1976	8,690	5.4	9,990	3.8
1978	8,340	5.3	9,300	3.6
1980	7,880	4.8	9,470	3.5
<u>First-professional</u>				
Medical				
1970	310	1.9	850	3.4
1972	-	-	-	-
1974	980	4.5	1,380	5.1
1976	1,180	4.5	1,590	5.2
1978	1,250	4.1	1,470	4.3
1980	1,480	4.6	1,580	4.3
Dental				
1970	30	**	130	1.5
1972	-	-	-	-
1974	170	2.1	260	2.9
1976	210	2.2	250	2.5
1978	250	2.5	260	2.4
1980	280	2.6	250	2.2
Law				
1970	550	2.2	1,280	3.5
1972	-	-	-	-
1974	1,230	3.5	1,880	4.3
1976	1,580	4.0	2,090	3.7
1978	1,610	4.1	2,010	3.4
1980	1,730	4.2	1,950	3.3

* Excludes unclassified students.

** Less than 0.05 percent.

- Data not collected on the survey form in this year.

Note: Percents were calculated with actual numbers, not rounded numbers.

While no substantial changes occurred in the total number of degrees earned by blacks (except at the master's level), this overall stability masked shifts in certain areas of degree awards to blacks between 1976 and 1981. There were significant shifts in degree awards between black men and women, between discipline divisions, and between institutions inside and outside the South. These are discussed next.

Degree awards to black men declined at every degree level from 1976 to 1981 (table 6). The number of black women increased at all levels, except the master's level; at this level, the decline for black women (12 percent) was about half that for black men (21 percent).

Table 6.-- Percent change in degrees awarded to blacks and whites, by degree level and sex: 1976 to 1981

Degree level	Blacks		Whites	
	1976	1981	Percent change 1976 to 1981	Percent change 1976 to 1981
Bachelor's				
Men	25,600	24,500	-4	-9
Women	33,500	36,200	+8	+9
Master's				
Men	7,800	6,200	-21	-17
Women	12,500	11,000	-12	+1
Doctor's				
Men	800	700	-10	-17
Women	400	600	+29	+31
First-professional				
Men	2,000	1,800	-12	*
Women	700	1,200	+71	+99

* Less than 0.5 percent.

Note: Numbers are rounded to hundreds; however, percent change was calculated with actual numbers.

These general trends also occurred to varying degrees among whites, with the exception that master's degree awards to white women and first-professional degree awards to white men did not decline from 1976 to 1981 as they did for their black counterparts.

In the rest of the disciplines, the percent black of all degree recipients remained about the same. In one of these disciplines, business and management, blacks remained at 6.7 percent of the bachelor's degree recipients even though the number of black recipients increased from 9,490 to 13,400 from 1976 to 1981.

(See appendix for actual numbers for all disciplines.) In 1981, business and management became the most popular discipline among all black bachelor's degree recipients in the U.S., ranking above education and the social sciences.

Most popular discipline divisions	Percent of all black bachelor's degree recipients	
	1976	1981
Business and management	16	22
Education	24	16
Social sciences	19	13

In 1981, for the first time, the ranking of the three most chosen disciplines for bachelor's degrees was the same for blacks as for non-blacks.

Master's degrees

Between 1976 and 1981, the representation of blacks among all master's degree recipients declined in all but seven discipline divisions. In psychology, blacks remained at 6.5 percent of all recipients; in the following six disciplines, the percent of black recipients increased.

Selected discipline divisions	Blacks as a percent of all master's degree recipients	
	1976	1981
Communications	5.5	6.0
Health professions	5.0	5.4
Interdisciplinary studies	3.0	5.1
Home economics	4.9	5.1
Business and management	3.7	4.1
Engineering	1.5	1.6

For the extent of decline in the proportions of black master's degree recipients in the other disciplines, see the appendix.

Business/management and public affairs/services increased their ranking among all black master's degree recipients between 1976 and 1981. Education declined significantly, yet still represented half of all master's degrees awarded to blacks in 1981.

Most popular discipline divisions	Percent of all black master's degree recipients	
	1976	1981
Education	61	50
Business and management	8	14
Public affairs and services	8	11

Those disciplines with decreases in the proportional representation of blacks were:

Blacks as a percent of all first-professional degree recipients

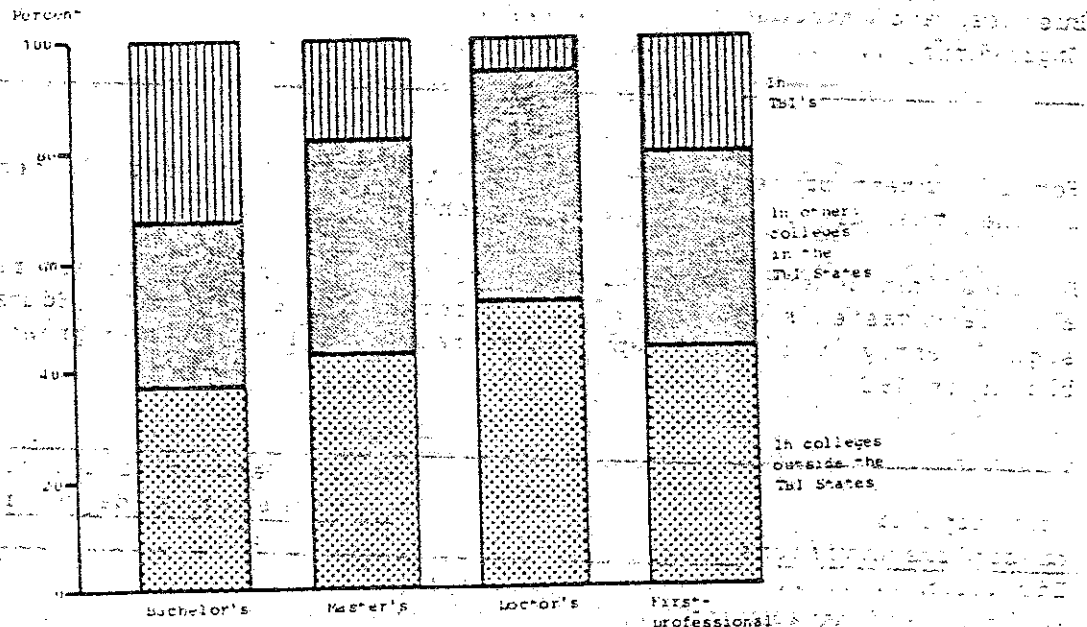
Selected discipline divisions	1976	1981
Medicine	5.3	5.0
Law	4.7	4.3
Osteopathic medicine	1.5	1.4
Optometry	1.4	0.8
Chiropractic medicine	1.6	0.6

The number and percent of black degree recipients in these disciplines, except law and medicine, were small (see the appendix tables for the actual numbers).

Degrees Awarded Inside and Outside the TBI States

To examine the changes in degree awards to blacks by different types of institutions, this report divides institutions into those located inside and those located outside the TBI States (the 20 States where the TBI's are located). Within the TBI States, data is separated for the traditionally black institutions and the non-traditionally black institutions in order to show the changing roles of each segment in graduating black students. To give a general idea of the relative importance of these groups of institutions, chart 6 displays the distribution of black degree recipients by level among the TBI's, the other colleges in the TBI States, and the colleges outside the TBI States.

Chart 6.-- Distributions of black degree recipients, by level, in TBI's, other colleges in the TBI States, and colleges outside the TBI States: 1981

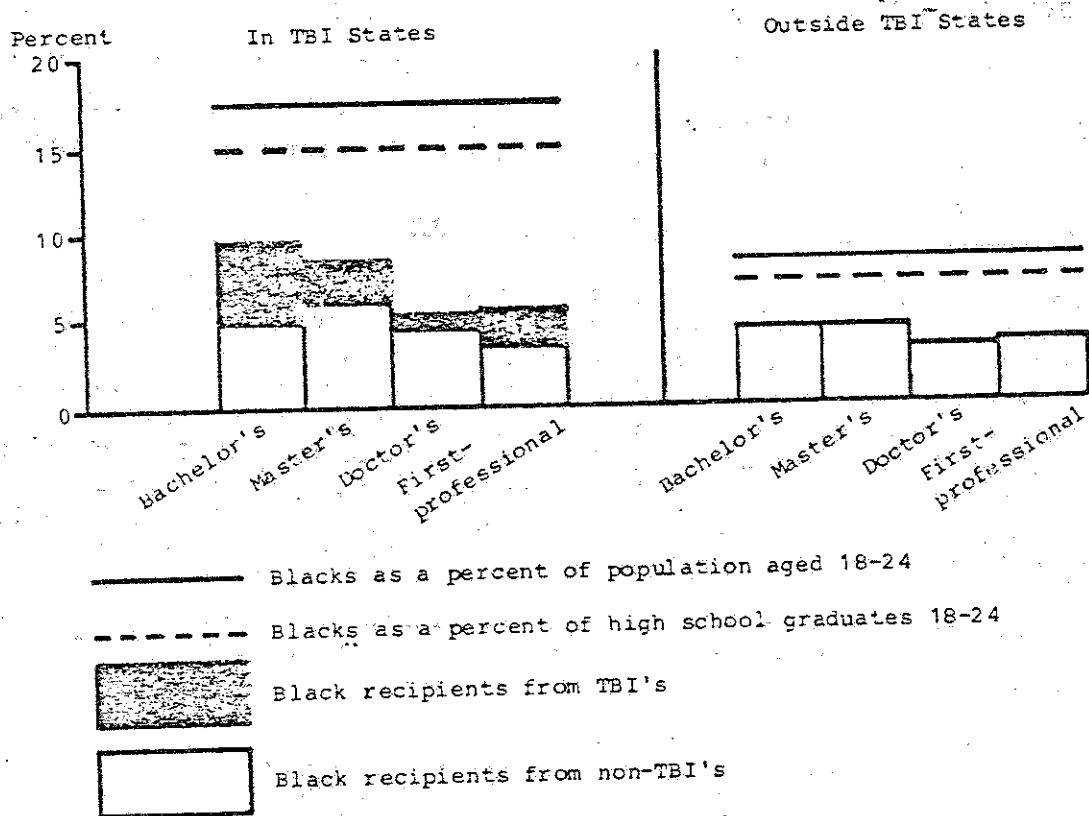


The majority of black-degree recipients at each level, except doctoral, earned their degrees in the TBI States in 1981, primarily because of the TBI's, which played a significant role in producing black graduates (chart 6).

In institutions outside of the TBI States, the number and percent of black graduates at the bachelor's and doctor's levels remained about the same between 1976 and 1981. The numbers and percents of black graduates at the master's and first-professional levels declined from 1976 to 1981 in these institutions (table 7).

According to their population, how well were blacks represented among degree recipients? Blacks were greatly underrepresented among graduates of non-TBI's in both regions when compared with their approximate proportion of the eligible college-age population (chart 7). In the TBI States, blacks were still underrepresented, even when black graduates from the TBI's were included.

Chart 7.-- Black representation among degree recipients, by level, in institutions inside and outside the TBI States: 1981



Degrees by Control and Classification of Institutions

Among the non-TBI's, private institutions awarded a higher percentage of their degrees to blacks than public institutions at the bachelor's, master's, and doctor's levels (table 8). This occurred both inside and outside the TBI States, except at the bachelor's level, where in the TBI States, blacks comprised a slightly higher percentage of degree recipients in public non-TBI's (5.0 percent) than in private non-TBI's (4.9 percent) (unpublished tabulation). This may be a result, in part, of the Adams desegregation suit, which since 1970 has involved the public higher education systems in many of the TBI States.¹⁶

¹⁶The case of Adams v. Richardson was filed by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in 1970, claiming that the Federal government was not enforcing the 1964 Civil Rights Act in certain States with dual systems of public higher education.

At both public and private non-TBI's, blacks comprised a smaller percent of master's degree recipients from institutions classified as doctoral than from other types of institutions (table 8). Doctoral institutions are the primary source of future faculty and researchers, and therefore play a vital role in increasing the supply of black faculty. In non-TBI's, black representation among full-time faculty was low.¹⁷

For More Information

For further information on aspects of this report, please contact Susan T. Hill, telephone (202) 254-6503. Additional copies of this report are available from the Statistical Information Office, National Center for Education Statistics, (Brown Building, Room 600), 460 Maryland Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C., 20202, telephone (202) 254-6057.

¹⁷In 1979, there were about 10,000 black full-time faculty in the non-TBI's and about 8,500 black full-time faculty in the TBI's. In the non-TBI's, blacks comprised 2.4 percent of all full-time faculty; black representation among full-time faculty was almost twice as high in public non-TBI's (2.7 percent) than in private non-TBI's (1.4 percent).

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1979; Higher Education Staff Information (EEO-6) survey; calculations by NCES.

Table D.-- First professional degree awards to blacks, by discipline division:
1976, 1979, and 1981*

Discipline division	1976		1979		1981	
	Blacks	Percent of total	Blacks	Percent of total	Blacks	Percent of total
Total	2,694	4.3	2,836	4.1	2,929	4.1
Dentistry	181	3.3	180	3.3	195	3.6
Medicine	708	5.3	762	5.2	767	5.0
Optometry	14	1.4	12	1.1	9	.8
Osteopathic medicine	12	1.5	18	1.7	16	1.4
Pharmacy	6	1.4	16	2.5	20	3.0
Podiatry	3	.7	15	2.6	20	3.4
Veterinary medicine	18	1.2	37	2.2	37	1.9
Chiropractic medicine	26	1.6	7	.4	13	.6
Law, general	1,519	4.7	1,500	4.3	1,576	4.3
Theological professions	206	3.9	289	4.5	276	4.4
Other	1	3.3	0	0	0	0

* Refers to academic years 1975-76, 1978-79, and 1980-81.

Note: Data for U.S. Service Schools are excluded.

Black Student Enrollment - Fall Term¹
Ann Arbor Campus

1982	1603
1981	1679
1980	1771
1979	1919
1978	2128
1977	2230
1976	2456
1975	2443
1974 ²	2391
1973 ²	2481
1972 ²	2233
1971 ²	1708
1970 ²	1546

¹Excludes students in Postgraduate Dentistry, Postgraduate Medicine, Hospital Training, Anesthesiology, the English Language Institute, and Other Locations.

²Includes non-U.S. citizens

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